

Bill - I thought
it wise to make
a record of my
talk with Woodward
John

Horton has sent
me copies of his
correspondence with
the Philadelphia
inquirer. He says
in the future his
writing will concern
no reference to events
that took place more
recently than the
T'ang Dynasty.

22 February 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Bob Woodward

Ordinarily I would not think it necessary to record a reasonably bland conversation with a journalist. I gather, however, that Woodward plans to write the definitive story (ultimately perhaps a book?) on Casey the man and the CIA. It therefore seems to me desirable to obtain reasonably complete records of what is said to Woodward if this is possible.

The only particularly remarkable statement made in our conversation, it seemed to me at least, was Woodward's remark as he was leaving that he planned to interview the head of the KGB.

We started our conversation with Casey the man. Woodward wanted me to give him my picture of what sort of person Casey is. I led in by presenting him with the St. Patrick's Day speech which I said was in many ways illustrative of Casey's personality and character. For one thing the fact that he found time to write it over a hectic weekend while travelling between Washington, New York and the dentist catching up after an extended trip abroad was in itself, it seemed to me, an indication of Casey's abilities. The speech itself was revealing of Casey's easy relationship with individuals. The setting on this occasion was, of course, advantageous as he was at home in New York with the Irish. Nevertheless it is a personal characteristic worth noting. More significant is the almost poetic quality of the commitment expressed in the concluding paragraphs to certain principles and concepts which he characterizes as "eternal". This, I said, was particularly relevant to the attacks on Casey for his alleged "sleazy" performance in certain financial dealings. The fact is, I pointed out, that Casey in fact is noted for, and in fact occasionally subjected to severe criticism for, extremely forthright and occasionally adversarial expression. This is about as far away from "sleaziness" as it is possible to get.

An element in Casey's character, I said, was his profound admiration for General Donovan. The qualities he admires in General Donovan are, of course, his courage but also his objectivity and concern with the importance of factual analysis. Casey's

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commitments to principle do not, in my judgement, support the proposition that he can be considered an ideologue. One of Casey's attributes is his ability to listen. Ultimately he may agree or disagree with comments or propositions but before he rejects them he understands them.

Woodward seemed to accept all this, at least he did not challenge anything I said, nodded and so on. He wanted to know about Casey's role in OSS which I reviewed briefly. He had obviously talked to Leo Cherne who had shown him a copy of his letter to Lelyveld. He wanted to know who could give him additional material about Casey in OSS and I suggested Bill Quinn and Henry Hyde. He said that he understood that Casey had written a book on OSS. I said that he had and that it was a good book but that I assumed that it would not be published until after Casey left the government.

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Was it true that Casey had targeted certain countries Nicaragua, Cuba, etc. for liberation? I said that I presumed that Casey would like to see these countries liberated but I was not aware of any specific plan or target list. I asked Woodward whether he had read the Union League Club speech which, I said, seemed to me to be an accurate statement of Casey's views and concerns. He said that he had.

How did the Agency react to Casey's leadership? Does he inspire the same kind of devoted loyalty that Ben Bradlee does to the staff of the Washington Post? (I refrained from speculating on this.) He wanted to know specifically how Bob Gates felt. I said that my impression was that Bob Gates was very happy with the present situation and might easily leave if Casey did. I told him about Bill Quinn's report of the general reaction to Casey as it became apparent during Senator Goldwater's trip.

Woodward seemed to be familiar with this reaction having talked to Goldwater about it. I said that I couldn't speak for everybody but I thought the morale in the Agency was extremely good.

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After a couple of hours I had to leave and Woodward thanked me for what he described as a candid description. I said that discussions of the intelligence process with the press, the public and the Congress obviously presented problems because of rather

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intricate security and administrative implications involved in public discussion of operational and international relations issues. I said that I could see that it was probably in the public interest to develop some understanding of the character of the man responsible for the intelligence process -- that he was capable of objective judgement, was competent, and informed, etc. Capabilities to penetrate the Kremlin, however, were hardly the subject for public examination.

Woodward then really startled me by saying that he was planning to go to Moscow to interview the KGB and to obtain their views about the CIA. I said that I could save him time and money by telling him exactly what they were going to say. They would say that CIA estimates were formulated by bigoted ideologues for the purpose of advancing imperialist objectives. On the other hand they would say that crafty and competent CIA operatives were spreading subversion and trouble in all areas of the world. I also found myself remarking that it seemed to me that the press was not only functioning as a fourth branch of government but also as a separate sovereign state. Woodward said that he knew that that wasn't true and that it was obviously in the public interest to try to find out what the KGB thought. Suppose, he said, that he were a man working for CIA under journalist cover (he said he knew that CIA did not use newspaper cover) and that I was the CIA Station Chief in Moscow. Would I not want him to interview the KGB as part of my assignment? I said certainly but that he would be working for me and not for the general public.

As he seemed determined to go ahead with the idea I said fine and I could think of few people better qualified to extract information from the KGB.

I think this exchange was taken in good part and that we parted friends. I certainly did. I think that Woodward is obviously a very competent man and, on balance, not unfriendly.


John A. Bross

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